

NEWSPLASH

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Preventing Injury

By Jim Ridge, Recreational Waters Compliance

If you are a pool owner, manager, or operator, a serious injury or death is the last thing you want to occur at your facility. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2000 there were 3,281 unintentional drownings in the United States. That's an average of nine per day. You obviously can't undo a drowning or a serious underwater accident, but you can try to decrease the chance of it happening at your facility. The information below may help you protect the people swimming in your public swimming pool.

Any qualified person looking over the facility is better than an unattended pool

- Consider using lifeguards even if they are not required by law to be at your facility. If full-time guards cost too much, try part-time guards during busy pool times. You may have a renter that would like to earn extra money in the evenings or weekends. Maybe a retired homeowners' association member would volunteer to attend a certification course and supervise the pool. Be flexible with rent to attract people that are already certified and would agree to supervise approved pool activities. Remember, any qualified person looking over the facility is better than an unattended pool. Someone watching the pool may also help stop trespassing problems. It may be as simple as asking pool users

and unit owners to let you know about any unusual activity in the pool area. They could report to a 24-hour emergency number that is already being used to report pool equipment emergencies.

- There needs to be constant supervision of children during any swimming activity. Encourage parents not to let other activities take away from their main responsibility – closely watching their children. Cell phone use, reading books, and chatting with other people are harmless activities, but they interfere with an adult's ability to monitor child swimmers. Running on the pool deck, roughhousing or diving into shallow water should be addressed immediately.



- Does your pool's gate(s) close on its own and latch? It should. Government agencies that follow underwater pool injuries and drownings report that most are due to the child being left alone and getting into a pool area. Many hotels have rooms that open into the pool area. It takes just a few seconds for a child to make their way past an open gate, or one with a bad latch.

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Fees for Permits

Based on changes in state law, the fees for the Recreational Waters Program have increased. As of July 1, 2004, new permitting applications must include the appropriate fee as listed below.

Construction Permit Application Fees:

- Type "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" Pools (as defined in Regulation 61-51) - \$400 plus \$.50 per square foot of surface area;
- Type "E" Pools (as defined in Regulation 61-51) - \$1,000 per flume (including minimum required design landing area) or water course, to include water slide. Additional area above minimum required landing area and all other Type "E" pools will be charged according to Type "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" pool types as noted above;
- The Department may collect an additional \$250 from the owner for each repeat final inspection that is required due to incomplete construction or construction that is not in accordance with permitted plans and specifications.

The Annual Operating Permit Fee has also increased. DHEC will send out bills for the 2005 Annual Operating Fees. The new fee amount is listed below.

Annual Operating Permits:

- Type "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" Pools - \$125 for the first pool on a property plus \$100 for each additional pool on the same property;
- Type "E" Pools - \$125 per flume or water course.

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- Is your pool correctly secured during the "off season?" Double check the fencing and gates. Make sure your lock is in good condition. Post "Pool Closed" signs and, if possible, talk with your local pool professional about installing a commercial pool cover. Not only do they help protect your recirculation equipment during the winter and spring, but they may prevent unauthorized access to the pool itself. Don't forget about properly securing the pool equipment room. There are hazardous chemicals and equipment in the room that should be accessible only to trained staff.
- Another major cause of drowning in public pools is solo swimming. In unmonitored pools it is difficult to control personal behavior, however swimming alone should be discouraged. It is listed on the mandated DHEC pool rules sign as an unacceptable pool activity. Marginal swimmers have no way out of trouble if they tire or get into deeper water and can't reach the poolside. Even experienced swimmers can suffer from muscle cramping, seizures or physical calamities that would make self-rescue impossible.
- Finally, insure your emergency notification device is present and always working properly. Daily checks are recommended because seconds count in a pool accident. If a telephone is used, have the pool's address clearly designated at that phone. Communities without the enhanced 911 systems need specific information so that first responders are not wasting precious time looking for your facility.

Proper patron supervision, good physical security of the pool area, and a means to notify emergency assistance are all part of preventing the kind of publicity no one wants at their public pool.

Winter Maintenance Tips

By Neeraj Patel, Recreational Waters Permitting

Some portions of this article are taken from the National Spa and Pool Institute's (NSPI) guidance manual, "Pool Maintenance: Protecting Your Investment." To view the manual, visit http://www.nspi.org/userdata/pool_maintenance.rtf

What happens to outdoor pools when summer and the swimming season are over? Even in temperate South Carolina, some precautions should be taken to winterize your pool. Precautions could include washing off pool equipment and accessories and storing them under cover, closing down the pool and/or covering the pool.

Simple Winterizing

In some climates, you will probably keep your pool filled and continue routine maintenance on a reduced schedule. This would include running the filter for half the time you normally would in the summer season. The pH should be checked once a week, and chlorination should be done once a week too. Pool covers help keep the pool clean and the pool water and chemicals from evaporating. Check with your local NSPI pool professional for special advice that applies to your area.



Closing the Pool

Only a few pools need to be drained during the winter. In fact, many pools handle cold temperatures better when partially filled with water as a buffer. A drained pool can also crack or pop out of the ground because of pressure from ground water. Your NSPI builder can give you guidelines to follow if you must drain your pool.

If you close your pool, keep these things in mind:

- Get your water balanced properly to prevent chemical stains, scaling and algae growth. Put in an extra dose of sanitizer to help keep the pool clean and algae free.
- Thoroughly clean and vacuum the pool. Drain below the skimmer inlet lines. In heavy freeze areas, drain below the return lines and then plug the lines.
- Close valves on the skimmer.
- Make sure water does not accumulate and freeze in skimmers.
- Clean and backwash the filter.
- Drain all water in the heater, filter, pump and piping system. Remove the pump motor and store in a dry place.
- Turn off all power to the support equipment and remove fuses or turn the circuit breakers to "OFF."
- If you have a slide or diving board, take it off and store it.
- Cover the pool and plug all openings.
- Store chemicals in a cool dry place.

Off-season maintenance

Winter is also a good time to consider pre-season maintenance. Perhaps the pool needs to be replastered or the deck resurfaced. Late winter or early spring is a good time for such work. Use the off-season to plan maintenance, get bids, hire a contractor and complete the work on the pool. Don't wait until May with pool season looming to make improvements, and don't forget to submit a change order!

And the Answer Is...

Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Public Swimming Pools

By Jim Ridge, Recreational Waters Compliance

The pool season always seems to generate plenty of questions from public pool owners, operators, and suppliers. Below you'll find several questions that are addressed to DHEC staff each swimming season.

Q. Do I have to notify DHEC when I open/close my pool?

A. No. There is no requirement for Department notification when opening or closing a pool for the season. For permanent closure, notification is required and certain steps must be taken to insure the pool is properly abandoned.

Q. My Certified Pool Operator (CPO) is no longer servicing my pool. Can I operate temporarily without a CPO and just check it myself?

A. The SC public pool regulation is specific in that it requires a CPO be involved in pool operation not less than three times per week. No variance is possible for a vacated operator position. Most commercial pool services can offer short-term contracts for CPO services, and properties commonly share pool operators while searching to fill a vacated CPO staff position.



Q. Do I call DHEC if I have questions about my CPO license renewal?

A. Since the Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (LLR) issued your license and maintains your certification record, you would need to contact them for help. For license renewal, testing dates, or address changes call LLR at (803) 896-4430.

Q. Will DHEC provide pool logbooks for 2005?

A. Yes, once again logbooks will be available to the pool owner through local DHEC EQC offices and to pool management companies providing they can furnish a list of pools by permit number.

Q. Are swim diapers required for toddlers swimming in SC public pools?

A. The SC regulation for public pools does not require swim diapers for young swimmers. Some studies recently done on the effectiveness of swim diapers prove they are less effective for containing fecal matter than first believed. The best preventative against fecal accidents involving toddlers is close supervision and regular breaks for bathroom visits.

Q. My condominium just changed management companies. Do we need to notify DHEC?

A. Yes, call Marquisha Williams at 803-898-3540 and let her know that your billing address has changed. This will minimize the chance that your pool permit invoice and annual operating sticker are sent to the wrong address.

Q. Our association's pool professional recommended we install a different type of chlorination system on our pool. Is this really necessary?

A. South Carolina has many "top notch" commercial pool suppliers. Most spend off-season time attending professional training and strive to keep up to date on the latest pool equipment and technology. They want to promote healthy swimming and many work closely with the Department to insure that goal is met. The local pool professional generally knows how to best treat and maintain your pool water. If in doubt, simply contact additional commercial suppliers in your area and always ask for references.

Fun Facts

Information From www.about.com

- Henry Sullivan, in 1923, was the first American to swim the English Channel.
- The turbo pump on the Space Shuttle main engine is so powerful it could drain an average family-sized swimming pool in 25 seconds.

EQC District Offices

The local Environmental Quality Control (EQC) Office performs compliance inspections and can provide technical assistance. Check the numbers below for the office in your area.

Appalachia I (<i>Anderson, Oconee</i>).....	(864) 260-5569
Appalachia II (<i>Greenville, Pickens</i>)	(864) 241-1090
Appalachia III (<i>Spartanburg, Cherokee, Union</i>)	(803) 596-3800
Catawba (<i>Lancaster, Chester, York</i>)	(864) 285-7461
Central Midlands (<i>Richland, Lexington, Newberry, Fairfield</i>).....	(803) 896-0620
Edisto Savannah (<i>Aiken, Orangeburg, Barnwell, Bamberg, Allendale</i>)	(803) 641-7670
Low Country (<i>Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Hampton</i>)	(843) 846-1030
Pee Dee (<i>Florence, Dillon, Marion, Marlboro, Darlington, Chesterfield</i>)	(843) 661-4825
Trident (<i>Charleston, Berkeley, Dorchester</i>)	(843) 740-1590
Upper Savannah (<i>Greenwood, Abbeville, Laurens, Saluda, Edgefield, McCormick</i>).....	(864) 223-0333
Waccamaw (<i>Horry, Georgetown, Williamsburg</i>)	(843) 448-1902
Wateree (<i>Sumter, Kershaw, Lee, Clarendon, Calhoun</i>).....	(803) 778-1531

DHEC Central Office Contact Numbers

Main Telephone Number	(803) 898-4300
Main Fax Number	(803) 898-4215
For questions concerning construction permits and change orders, call Shawn Clarke	(803) 898-3544
For questions concerning program policies and compliance issues, call Jim Ridge	(803) 898-4015
For questions concerning operating permit fees and address changes, call Marquisha Williams ...	(803) 898-3540

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